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DDCI #A16 SPYSKIS BJT 370
ExD BY FRED COLEMAN
DDI MOSCOW, MARCH 23 (AP)- HAVE AMERICAN SPIES IN THE SOVIET UNION
DDP GOOFED?

ONE A COUPLE OF RUSSIAN NEWSMEN DECIDED THE SPIES NEED HELP, AND
DOCI THIS HAS LED TO A CLASH OF WORDS BETWEEN AMERICAN CLOAK-AND-DAGGER
MEN AND RUSSIAN TONGUE-IN-CHEEK MEN.

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (CIA) WAS UP AGAINST SOMETHING TOO
BIG FOR THEM, THE RUSSIANS SAID, SO THEY VOLUNTEERED TO HELP OUT.

THERE ARE OTHER THINGS A SPY HAS TO SNOOP OUT BESIDES INFORMATION
ON NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS, MILITARY SECRETS AND ALL THOSE THINGS
WHICH GIVE THE PROFESSION ITS GLAMOR. THEY MUST KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE:

HOW MANY GAS STATIONS ARE IN OPERATION TO SERVE MOSCOW'S
AUTOMOBILES?

THE CIA MEN SET TO WORK WITH CHARACTERISTIC SCORN FOR ALL THE
RISKS INVOLVED IN THIS SUPER-SECRET PROJECT, AND CAME UP WITH A
REPORT MARCH 1. THE CIA FOUND ONLY EIGHT GAS STATIONS IN THIS
CAPITAL OF 6.5 MILLION PEOPLE.

THIS, IN THE ESTIMATION OF THE TWO RUSSIAN JOURNALISTS, WAS A
PRETTY POOR DISPLAY OF ESPIONAGE, AND PERHAPS A REFLECTION ON THE
WHOLE PROFESSION. THEY FELT, THE WRITERS SAID, THAT IT SHOWED THE
CIA MEN WERE EITHER LAZY OR STUPID, BUT AT ANY RATE WEREN'T
BUCKLING DOWN TO THE JOB. SO THEY VOLUNTEERED TO HELP OUT, AND
SAVE THE GOOD NAME OF THE SPY PROFESSION.

"WE ARE WORKING FOR THE CIA," SAID AN ARTICLE IN THE WEEKLY
NEWSPAPER LITERARY GAZETTE. IT WAS SIGNED "AMATEUR SPIES V.
OSTROVSKY AND M. TRAKHMAN."

"A CIA AGENT HAS BEEN GIVEN A COMPLICATED TASK: TO FIND OUT THE
EXACT NUMBER OF GAS STATIONS IN MOSCOW," THEY EXPLAINED.

"MAYBE MR. X IS LAZY BY NATURE. MAYBE HE CAN COUNT ONLY WITH
HIS FINGERS, BUT HE HASN'T COPEd WITH HIS TASK."

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THE TWO DECIDED TO SHOW THE CIA HOW TO GO ABOUT SUCH A DELICATE
JOB. THEY REPORTED THEY TOOK A CAMERA, GOT INTO AN AUTOMOBILE AND
SPENT A DAY PHOTOGRAPHING MOSCOW GAS STATIONS, AND CAME UP WITH
PICTURES OF 99.

"BY EVENING WE WERE TIRED," THEY WENT ON. "THAT WAS ENOUGH. LET
THE AGENTS OF THE CIA GET INVOLVED IN THIS THEMSELVES. THEY GET
GOOD MONEY, BUT WORK BADLY."

AFTER ALL THIS, THE QUESTION STILL REMAINS: HOW MANY GAS STATIONS
ARE THERE IN MOSCOW, ANYWAY?

TO PEOPLE WHO KNOW MOSCOW, THE FIGURE OF 99 APPEARED TO INCLUDE
MANY NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: PUMPS FOR TAXIS, PUBLIC VEHICLES,
FACTORY-OWNED VEHICLES, GOVERNMENT-OWNED CARS, AND SO FORTH.

SO FAR AS FOREIGNERS ARE CONCERNED, THERE IS ONLY ONE GAS STATION
IN MOSCOW WHERE THEY ARE PERMITTED TO BUY THE SOVIET VERSION OF
PREMIUM QUALITY GAS.

ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF STATIONS SELL GAS TO THE PUBLIC.

AN EDITOR AT THE LIBRARY GAZETTE WAS ASKED TODAY HOW MANY GAS
STATIONS IN MOSCOW SELL GAS TO THE PUBLIC.

THE EDITOR SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW.

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